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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 001067

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STATE FOR SCA/FO A/DAS MOON, SCA/A, S/CRS, S/CT, EUR/RPM
INL/CIVPOL
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
NSC FOR JWOOD
OSD FOR SHIVERS
CENTCOM FOR CSTC-A, CG CJTF-101, POLAD

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SUBJECT: APRIL 27TH ATTACK ON VICTORY DAY CEREMONY

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood for reasons (b) and (d)

11. (C/REL ISAF) SUMMARY: Afghan authorities believe that at least three and possibly as many as seven individuals carried out the April 27 attack against the Victory Day ceremony presided over by President Karzai and attended by IROA senior officials, politicians and other Afghan VIPs from across the ethnic and political spectrum, and the diplomatic corps. The response by Afghan security forces was quick and professional. Casualties among the audience and security forces include two killed and 11 wounded. Three attackers were killed and three suspects are being questioned; the investigation is ongoing. Finger-pointing among Afghan security agencies began almost immediately, and Parliament has called the Ministers of Defense and Interior and the Director of the National Directorate for Security (NDS) to testify today (April 29) on the attack and their agencies' role in planning the event. All three survived no-confidence votes. Embassy has not detected thus far any wavering on the part of Afghan officials or international partners on the IROA's ability to follow through on the plan to turn over full security responsibility for Kabul to Afghan authorities by August 12008. The text of the Ambassador's April 29 public statement regarding the attack is at para 8.

12. (C/REL ISAF) Synopsis of Attack: On 27 April 08 at approximately 0945, insurgents, working from a third story room in a hotel approximately 400 meters from the site, fired upon the Victory Day ceremonies in central Kabul. They targeted the reviewing stands where President Karzai and other Afghan and foreign dignitaries (including Ambassador Wood) were seated. The attack was launched by at least three individuals armed with a PKM machine gun, AK-47s and rifle-mounted 40mm grenades (not mortars as earlier reported). The attackers initiated their fire during the midst of a 21-gun salute (cannon fire) which initially caused confusion among Afghan security forces and spectators. Although the attackers had line-of-sight to the center of the parade grounds, their weapons fire was limited to indirect, non-aimed fire. Both President Karzai and Ambassador Wood were safely evacuated to their nearby motorcades. (Embassy Diplomatic Security agents also evacuated the British Ambassador to the U.S. Embassy.) According to IROA officials, one Afghan Member of Parliament and one 10-year old child were killed in the attack, and 11 Afghan VIPS and spectators were wounded. (Soldiers assembled in the parade grounds

for the ceremonial pass and review were carrying unloaded weapons and had been searched by the PPS before entering the parade grounds.)

¶3. (C/REL ISAF) IROA security forces from the Presidential Protective Service (PPS) and National Directorate for Security's Directorate-10 (NDS D-10) quickly pinpointed the source of the attack, returned fire, and within minutes entered the hotel where they discovered three individuals in a third-floor room. Two were already deceased and the third died moments later from apparent shrapnel wounds. It is unclear whether the three had been hit by police gunfire or purposely or accidentally detonated their own grenades or both. Authorities detained three individuals whom they encountered coming down the hotel stairs as they entered; the three are currently in NDS custody and being questioned. Authorities are also detaining over 200 other individuals for questioning who sought shelter in the hotel basement. PPS and NDS claim that the room containing the three armed insurgents was pad-locked from the outside upon their entry into the hotel indicating that the three had outside support. Both the Taliban and HIG have publicly claimed responsibility, but there is no evidence that anyone other than the Taliban was involved.

¶4. (C/REL ISAF) Response of Security Forces: By all accounts, the PPS and NDS D-10 officers responded in a timely and professional manner with both the evacuation of Karzai and the counter-fire to the attack site. Security for the event was a shared responsibility among several agencies including the PPS, NDS DS-10 and other NDS operatives, the Kabul City Police, and Defense Ministry personnel. There has been fingerpointing among the various security organizations involved, and the IROA is

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conducting an internal review to pinpoint responsibility and to identify weaknesses that need to be addressed. State/Diplomatic Security mentors are also conducting an internal review with the PPS leadership to determine appropriate corrective actions.

¶5. (C/REL ISAF) Political Fallout: The media have denounced the Afghan Government for having failed to prevent the attack. Former mujahadeen, including Members of Parliament, reacted emotionally, interpreting the attack on the anniversary of the defeat of Soviet forces to be a direct affront to their honor. President Karzai has also speculated about dismissing one or all of the MOD, MOI and NDS chiefs. On April 28, the Ambassador relayed a message to parliamentary leaders, emphasizing the need for solidarity in the face of an attack on all the Afghans represented at the event and urging that the focus remain on defeating those responsible. The Ministers of Defense and Interior and the NDS Director were called before Parliament to testify today (April 29) on the attack and their agencies' role in planning the event. They survived no-confidence votes.

¶6. (C/REL ISAF) Impact on Kabul Security Arrangements: Early indications are that Afghan officials and key Allies (UK, the Netherlands, Canada) do not believe the April 27 attack will or should have any impact on Afghan authorities taking responsibility for Kabul city security in August 2008, in keeping with Karzai's commitment at the NATO Summit in Bucharest. We are not aware at this time of any wavering on the part of Allies to meet this objective. Post notes the helpful public comments by UNSRSG Eide affirming his expectation that the security transition will take place on schedule.

¶7. (U) Text of the Statement by U.S. Ambassador William Wood on the Victory Day Attack:

The flag at the American Embassy is flying at half mast today in memorial to National Assembly member

Samkanai and other victims of the Taliban attack two days ago. In addition to President Karzai and international dignitaries, Afghan leaders from every ethnic group, linguistic group, Islamic group, and political group were attacked in the reviewing stand. This was an attack by the Taliban against all of Afghanistan on a day when all of Afghanistan was celebrating with pride a great national victory. All of Afghanistan should react in solidarity against the attackers. The United States expresses its deepest condolences to all those who were victims of this attack and to their families and friends.

Tragically, the attackers succeeded in getting close enough to fire some shots. The security institutions of Afghanistan defeated the attack within 120 seconds of the first shot and performed in a skilled, professional, and disciplined way during the attack. The United States expresses its solidarity with those forces and salutes their heroism and dedication.

For my part, I look forward to attending next year's Victory Day parade.
WOOD